



**31 March 2025**

**FROM: VERMONT ACCESS NETWORK (VAN)**

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**RE: S. 59 Amendments to Vermont's Open Meeting Law**

Chair Birong and Members of the House Government Operations + Military Affairs Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on S. 59 which proposes to amend Vermont's Open Meeting Law.

Vermont Access Network (VAN) is a nonprofit membership organization established to promote the effective operation and advancement of Public, Educational and Government (PEG) Access TV, also known as community media.

Vermont's 24 community media centers deliver essential media services to communities within and outside of cable TV service territories in Vermont. These include extensive coverage and archiving of many types of public meetings both in-person and via hybrid coverage.

As active partners with public bodies, VAN members have a vested interest in state rules related to video recording and archival preservation of public

meetings. It is for this reason that VAN is included in the Act 133 Working Group described in [Act 133](#), passed last year.<sup>1</sup>

VAN has long supported wider accessibility of public meetings through technological means. Our experience and 40 year history in this realm underscore our support of Act 133 and its hybrid access and archiving requirements.

Given that many of Vermont's municipalities work with third parties—such as AMOs—to record and preserve video coverage of their meetings, we respectfully suggest that the current version of S.59 acknowledge this and be amended to include “or cause to record” in Section (6)(A):

*(6) Local ~~nonadvisory~~ public bodies; meeting recordings.*

*(A) A public body of a municipality or political subdivision, except advisory bodies, shall record **or cause to record**, in audio or video form, any meeting of the public body and post a copy of the recording in a designated electronic location for a minimum of 30 days following the ~~approval and~~ posting of the ~~official~~ minutes for a meeting.*

VAN is also concerned that the requirements to record and preserve public meeting coverage are unaccompanied by concomitant funding sources. That is, these rules can be considered to be an “unfunded mandate” by the municipalities, a position shared by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

Thank you for your consideration. We are happy to provide any further clarification or testimony upon request.

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<sup>1</sup> Sec. 10 creates the Working Group on Participation and Accessibility of Municipal Public Meetings and Elections to study and make recommendations to improve the accessibility of and participation in meetings of local public bodies, annual municipal meetings, and local elections, and to increase transparency, accountability, and trust in government.